

Chief of Canada's top spy agency urges shutdown of Tiktok as anti-China hysteria continues

James Clayton
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Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) Director David Vigneault has all but publicly urged the government to ban TikTok, issuing a dire “warning” to “young people” against using the social media platform on the entirely bogus premise that it is a tool of the Chinese state.

Vigneault’s attack on TikTok builds upon the ongoing and baseless accusations from Canada’s top domestic spy agency that China has interfered in Canadian elections and blackmailed Canadian politicians.

It is part of a sustained campaign of anti-Chinese hysteria whipped up by Canada’s security agencies, corporate media and political establishment. The demonization of Beijing is the ideological component of Canadian imperialism’s preparations for war with China in the Indo-Pacific, which Ottawa intends to fight alongside American imperialism, its military and geostrategic partner for over eight decades. The goal of North America’s twin imperialist powers is to prevent China emerging as a global economic and geostrategic competitor by consolidating their dominance over the strategically crucial Eurasian landmass.

This insane program, which includes risking a global conflagration with nuclear weapons that would call into question the very survival of humanity and that requires the diversion of vast resources from social spending to armaments, can only be pursued through increasingly anti-democratic, authoritarian rule at home. This is what lies behind Vigneault’s diatribe against TikTok, which the ruling elite views as dangerous because it enables workers and young people to share information and access news that contradicts the pro-war narrative of the ruling class.

Speaking in a “set piece” studio interview with Catharine Tunney, a “national security reporter” with the state-run Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Vigneault stated, “I would absolutely not recommend someone have TikTok,” because it is “very clear” from the app’s design that data gleaned from its users “is available to the government of China.”

In fact, it’s not “clear” at all. No Canadian or American official or technical expert has been able to demonstrate *how* TikTok user data is available to the Chinese government. In the face of similar smears from American politicians and US government threats to shut down the company’s US operations, TikTok has taken unprecedented steps to insulate its data from Chinese state interference. All of its US user data is now stored on servers

housed in the US and owned by the US software giant Oracle. Meanwhile, Canadian user data is either stored on the Oracle platform or on servers in Singapore.

Vigneault and other representatives of the security establishment have only to make sweeping unsubstantiated claims against Beijing and Chinese-owned companies for highly paid “journalists” like Tunney, who have reduced themselves to the role of court stenographers for imperialism, to promote them as the gospel truth.

These claims, it need be added, are made by agencies engaged in the largest spying program on the world’s population, as revealed by whistleblower Edward Snowden. US-owned social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X, as well as providers like Google, have a revolving door between their top levels of management, and military and security “experts” from the state. What’s more, there is hard evidence to prove that these platforms make available the vast amounts of data they collect on their users for the purposes of state surveillance.

Vigneault’s subsequent accusations against TikTok, which went completely unchallenged, were a laundry list of the very capabilities which CSIS, Canada’s signals intelligence agency, the Communications Security Establishment Canada, and their counterparts in the US and Britain already have. Said Vigneault, “There is a very clear strategy on the part of the Government of China, which is to acquire as much personal information as possible from anyone around the world. They’re using big data analytics, they have amazing computer farms crunching the data, they are developing artificial intelligence...”

Western state spying agencies such as the National Security Agency in the United States have had unlimited access to widely used software programs such as Microsoft Windows for decades via a digital “backdoor.” This permits them to access not only user data, but every single keystroke made on an individual’s computer. NSA can activate the camera and microphone on a computer desktop or phone or smart TV, without the individual being aware.

In 2017, WikiLeaks exposed the “Vault 7” documents, which detailed a comprehensive program of US interference in the 2012 French elections, using the most sophisticated digital hacking tools. NSA’s “zero-day exploits” can be installed on the operating system of any device such as a phone or computer, and run

undetectable until the device is re-started. Canada's ally Israel is currently using digital signals from cell phones and Wi-fi networks to target civilians in Gaza for destruction using snipers, drones and bombs.

None of this troubles Vigneault. What disturbs him is that TikTok refuses to share its user data with western spy agencies, leaving them "blind" to the growing radicalization of young people and workers taking place on the platform. A 2022 US government proposal to avoid a ban of the app required TikTok to provide its data to the US Department of Justice and the Department of Defence, "eerily similar" as a *Gizmodo* tech journalist observed, "to the surveillance tactics critics have accused Chinese officials of abusing."

CSIS and the Canadian state are participants in the "Five Eyes" alliance, alongside the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand, which operates a global eavesdropping and espionage network against the population of the whole world. Snowden's revelations showed this surveillance network targets everyone whose views and actions could be of interest to Washington, even political leaders who are close US allies, like former German Chancellor Angela Merkel. But the ultimate targets of this global spying operation are left wing movements and the threat of revolutionary activity in the working class.

Appealing to far-right fears of "communism," Vigneault insinuated that TikTok served "to protect the interests of the Chinese Communist Party, so ultimately... this is a threat to the way we live." Rather than challenge this absurd slander, dredged up from the sewer of the Cold War-era "Red Scare," Tunney instead repeated the phrase ominously for emphasis: "I want to acknowledge the magnitude of that—'a threat to the way we live'." She then asked Vigneault if he would ban TikTok, adding in a revealing aside, "I know you don't tell the government what to do, at least not explicitly." Vigneault replied, cautiously, that the Liberal government's decision to ban the app from government-issued cell phones was a "very astute approach."

Vigneault's remarks will have been welcomed with open arms by the Trudeau government. Though it has repeatedly come under attack from the opposition Conservatives and New Democrats, and sections of the corporate media like the *Globe and Mail*, for being too "soft" towards China, Trudeau has overseen a hardline policy towards Beijing. From the detention of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, to the strengthening of Canada's military presence in the Asia-Pacific, recent years have witnessed a dramatic sharpening of tensions between the two countries. With its recently introduced Bill C-70, the so-called "foreign interference bill," the Liberals have responded to the trumped up allegations of Chinese "interference" in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections with a sweeping attack on core democratic rights. This includes granting CSIS massive new powers to collect and surveil Canadians' electronic data.

The ruling-class attack on TikTok and the broader anti-China campaign confront the obstacle of the growing radicalization of Canadian workers and youth. TikTok has become a popular platform for young people and workers to share their political criticisms of US and Canadian imperialism and the imperialist-backed Zionist genocide in Gaza. Palestinian civilians and

journalists have used it to document the horrors of genocide, including with brutal images and videos of casualties, witness testimonies, and massive explosions demolishing whole city blocks.

In comparison, US-controlled social media platforms and online services such as Facebook and Instagram are now actively censored to the point where it is becoming increasingly impossible to share critical political content without having one's account suspended. When such content is posted, it often cannot be seen by others.

In 2020, Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google's parent company Alphabet, testified before the US Congress that the Google search engine censors the *World Socialist Web Site* and other left-wing publications.

The US and Canadian ruling classes are desperate to silence the voices of the youth, because a rapidly growing layer of young people is implacably opposed to imperialist war, and increasingly to the capitalist system which produces it.

In a final insult to the intelligence of his audience, Vigneault declared that private user information from TikTok "lands in places that don't live by the same principles of rule of law [and] respect for human rights" as Canada.

What astonishing hypocrisy! The Canadian state is currently arming and defending Israel, which is carrying out a genocide and using sophisticated digital spying techniques to target civilians for death! Ottawa has been involved in virtually every US-led war of aggression over the past 30 years, and is playing a leading part in the US-NATO war on Russia, which the Western powers provoked by inciting Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine.

Two of Canada's closest allies, the US and Britain, have hounded and imprisoned Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, for exposing the rampant and unrestricted spying of the imperialist states on the world's people, among many other crimes.

David Vigneault speaks for a state soaked in the blood of Somali, Yugoslav, Haitian, Libyan, Afghan, Iraqi, Ukrainian, Russian and now Palestinian civilians. These imperialist wars, which erupted with fury after the dissolution of the USSR by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991, have killed several million people.

Vigneault and his fellow spymasters, the Trudeau Liberal government, and all the opposition parties in parliament support the rapidly escalating third imperialist world war, directed against Russia in Eastern Europe, Iran in the Middle East, and China in the Asia-Pacific. Workers and young people determined to oppose ongoing state surveillance and the gutting of their democratic rights must draw the connection between these authoritarian measures and the waging of imperialist war. The defence of all democratic and social rights is possible only through the building of a global anti-war movement led by the working class.



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